

C. H. S.

BANDWAGON

JUNE, 1955

25c



WHO WILL BE MISS CIRCUS WEEK IN 1956?

(See story on page 6)

— The Circusiana Magazine —

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Founded in 1939

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The Editor Says

Most of us have read in newspapers and current periodicals about exchange students and teachers, and how they help to promote good feeling between the United States and another country. We all probably thought vaguely that that sounds like a good idea, but it doesn't affect me. However, you too, can share in this experience.

On most any circus that you visit there are some foreign acts, or some girls who have come over for the season who are sleeping in sleepers or in trailers. Even if they are fortunate on a rare occasion to go to a hotel that is still not a "home." Why not invite them to your home. Sometimes it is possible to have them overnight, but anyway there are usually two or three hours between afternoon and night shows, when you can invite them in for a home-like visit and some food.

We had this experience recently when we had three English clowns from the Mills Show as our guest for a weekend. The Dewsberrys had visited rarely in homes when they were here last year, but Herbert Merry had only been in this country a few weeks, and was delighted with everything he saw. We, Americans, take so much for granted.

Try it sometime.

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Bailey Bros. and Cristiani Circus

Written by Hank Fraser, C. H. S. Member

On Monday, April 11, 1955, the Reverend William Buck, Carlos Lamarche, and I visited the Bailey Bros. and Cristiani Circus during the afternoon performance at the ball park in Marshall, Texas. Rain had fallen for several days prior to our drive from Ruston. It was very cloudy and windy during most of the performance, but the clouds began to retard and permit the blue sky to show its face near the end of the performance.

The Bailey-Cristiani Circus had been on the road only a few weeks out of Sarasota winter quarters, and everything was shining. A new red and yellow-orange striped side wall or backdrop was used to enclose the performance area. The new backdrop featured a blue diamond outline with the CBC initials in the middle. This emblem was spaced at regular intervals on the backdrop. There are six aluminum center poles that are arranged in a line to support the aerial rigging for this very ingenious ball park layout. The backdrop and band canopy are placed a number of yards behind the poles. Three special made aluminum rings are placed in front of the poles; the rings make a flashy appearance for the presentation of the acts. Lucio Cristiani has added a superb bear act that is worked in a steel arena with fine props.

One of the most outstanding features from the physical equipment standpoint in my opinion is the use of large heavy duty International and General Motors cabs. The tractors are painted red and look to be in very good condition. The trailers are painted up to the center in red with white above and silver tops. The title appears in a very modern version of Roman caps and script in red on the upper white surface of the trailers. I think these trailers are tops in special constructed circus trailers.

In my opinion the performance is really one that a fan or general spectator would class with the highest hours of enjoyment in the field of circusdom. Mrs. Oscar Cristiani has applied her artistic skill to the designing of many of the costume creations; they are really one of the main centers of attraction on the show. The addition of the Cristiani Aerial Bears certainly places the audience in the right circus spirit. The act is worked by a young girl who commands the large group of bears consisting of several different types. Aerial acts, clowns, elephants, performing dogs, and the fine trained ponies of Mr. and Mrs. Portis Sims add very much to the performance. The renowned Cristiani's do a fine job with their riding number, and you have to look fast to keep up with them. Fred and Ortons Canestrelli have a sensational rolley-polley act that will keep you right on the very edge of your seat. Mr. Phil Doto and his wonderful organization keeps the music right up to time. He has one of the best bands that I have seen for its size. The use of an electric organ blends in well with the drums and trumpet pitches that Mr. Doto puts his all into. His choice of musical compositions adds much to the performance. Mr. Milton Robbins does a swell job announcing, and he blows in many headliners with the shrill cry of his whistle.

Two of the acts, a cannon act featuring a girl and a high wire number, did not appear in Marshall. These two attractions of the Bailey-Cristiani organization were finishing winter dates; they were to join the show very soon. I was told that the contracted girl cannon act would project her for an exceptionally long flight through the air.

As many of you know it is always hard to find the time to visit with everyone, but I did have several talks with a number of my old friends and managed to make several new ones. Among these were several members of the Cristiani family—Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Cristiani, Mr. and Mrs. Mogador Cristiani, Mr. Belmonte Cristiani, Mr. Lucio Cristiani, Mr. Pete Cristiani, and Mr. Daviso Cristiani. Mr. Harry Hammond was with the show again this year, and it was nice to visit with him again. I also had a pleasant chat with one of the masters of circusdom, Mr. Poodles Hannaford. Mr. Hannaford has a clown comedy act that really keeps the audience laughing. I had talked with Senor Daviso last year, and I enjoyed seeing him again. I noticed that his famous stallion "Play Boy" had a fancy checkerboard pattern worked into his coat just behind the saddle. This design must have taken one of his men sometime to create. It surely did me good to see Senor Daviso have his boots polished and his stallion's hoofs painted before Senor Daviso's entry. Everyone certainly takes pride in the neat presentation of the acts.

This will be about all for now, but I do hope that you will make it a point to see this show when it plays your town. The members of Lucio and Bob Stevens organization are doing a fine job in trying to give the public a fine show, and be sure to tell your friends how much you enjoyed the circus.

Charlie Duple attended King Bros. Circus in Louisville on April 21, where a capacity night crowd was on hand. I also met Arnold Maley and Floyd King, owners, and a few other friends including Tom and Maxine Kennedy.

Harry Shell of Farmington, Missouri, writes that he has one of the two steam calliopes on circus wagons, that are trouping today. (King Bros. has the other). He will be in Montpelier, Ohio, on June 23-24-25, the Missouri State Fair August 20 to 28th, and the Indiana State Fair Sept. 2 to 6th.

Walter H. Gomes, C.H.S. member of Cambridge, Mass., had quite a week recently. He watched R. B. unload and set up on a Monday at the Boston Garden. Then he saw the show Tuesday and Thursday nights and waved good-bye to the train as it disappeared into the darkness at 12:30 in the morning of May 16th on its way to Baltimore. He hopes to catch it under canvas at Worcester, Mass., or Newport, R. I.

The Great Fred J. Mack Circus

Columbus, Ohio, April 18, 1955. The Great Fred J. Mack 3 Ring Circus opened here today at the Northern Lights Shopping Center to a $\frac{3}{4}$ afternoon crowd and a full night house.

This new show owned by a group of about twenty Columbus businessmen is moving on about 30 units, half of which are show owned. Around 70 people are with the show. Fred D. Pfening, Jr., CFA, CHS, is president of the owning corporation, Public Enterprise, Inc.

The show is presented in a new blue and tangerine 70 with two 30's and one 40. The marquee is in matching colors and is also new. A grandstand is used with 600 new folding chairs. Music is furnished by a hi-fi record player using three turn tables mounted in a sound truck.

The midway is flashed with a 30 ft. straight ticket-office wagon, similar to the one used on the Tom Mix Circus. It is well lettered and has a full sized clown on each side. An animal exhibit is presented in the side show. This is operated by R. A. Miller, of the Fort Ware Game Farm, and uses a 40 by 60 top, with a 80 foot front. A ride on the baby elephant is included with the 25c admission. A 20 by 30 display top and three concession tops fill out the midway.

The show is loaded with good down to earth mud show people. Chief Keys is boss canvasman and his wife, Tillie, has the cook house. Orlo Sparton is program director and keeps it moving. George Hubler is in the wagon and is concession manager.

The show has two automatic stake drivers and used a farm tractor the first few days but this was left in quarters. The pole semi was built special and allows the poles to be loaded from the side, rather than overhead. The stake drivers are loaded in the back of the pole truck, which is a former auto transport. The canvas semi was also built special.

Through an advertising tieup with Coca-Cola that company furnished all masking curtains and end pieces for the reserves. This with the blue tent makes a strong flash in the big top.

The show is using window cards and heralds. The herald is being printed by R. H. Harvey at Perry, Iowa, and is loaded with oldtime circus material and is similar to the ones used in the 20's and 30's. A number of block ticket sales were made in advance on the Columbus shopping center stands and this called for three shows a day. Following the Columbus week the show goes to one day stands on a sponsored basis. Frank Bland is the general agent and is about

eight weeks ahead. Promotion directors are being used in about half of the towns set.

The show is presenting a very strong show for its size. The performance is running close to one hour and 45 minutes. This may be trimmed some on the road. The program and staff follows.

Grand Entry

Harter's Dogs, Sparton's Dogs and Ford's Dogs

Clown Number

Three swinging ladders

Elephant Banner Walk around

Riding Dogs, Ford's Goats, Riding Dogs

Clowns

Arlean Duo Perch

Al Ross Rolly Bolly, Spitzer's Unicycle

Miss Fredeen Neck Loop

Clowns

Cloud Swing in three rings

Spartonettes Roman Rings

Al Ross Comedy Bicycle

Sparton Trio Wire Act

Margerete Delise Rolling Globe

Manage horses in rings one and three

Mickey King, one arm planges

Happy Spitzer's Francis the Mule

Miss Frankie Lu Woods and Jesse the wonder elephant

Who Will Be "Miss Circus Week" In 1956?

On the front cover is a picture of Miss Vicki Carpenter, Hollywood CCC model, as Miss Circus Week for 1955. With her is Mr. Richard Arcand, President of the Circus Clown Club of America.

A contest will be held to elect Miss Circus Week of 1956. Members of the C. H. S. will be eligible to enter. Think now about whom you would like to have elected Miss Circus Week of 1956.

The Circus Clown Club has suggested that a national convention be held in 1956 in New York State combined with the national convention of the Circus Historical Society. This sounds like a fine idea, and we would like to have your reaction to the suggestion. Write to Bette Leonard or Bob King and tell them what you think of the idea.

18 Miles From Boston, Sudbury Girl, 12, Hunted by Police, Found at Circus

Sent in by Walter Gomes, C. H. S. Member

State troopers all through New England were looking for Janice St. Germain last night and all the time she was at the circus.

Janice, who is 12, left home in Sudbury yesterday without telling anyone.

She was gone all night, until a railroad police officer spotted her sitting in the waiting room at North Station at 3 a.m. today.

Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur St. Germain, hurried in town from their home on Hudson road.

Janice said that she was playing with some chums on a highway near her home about 6 yesterday afternoon and began thinking about the circus in Boston.

A man who knew her drove by, and she asked for a ride to Boston.

The driver brought her in town. Although her funds totalled 10 cents, she got into the circus.

Coming out, Janice decided to puzzle out some way of getting home.

She was nodding sleepily on the bench in the waiting room when officer Gennaro Lambo saw her.

The story quickly came out, and Janice's parents were notified.

Police Chief John McGovern of Sudbury had organized a widespread search when he received report last night that the girl had been picked up by a motorist.

WINTER QUARTERS IN HUGO

Hank Fraser, C. H. S. member of Ruston, Louisiana, was invited by his friend Mr. Hardy A. O'Neal to go to Hugo, Oklahoma, to visit with Mr. Bill Woodcock in March of this year. They spent some time going over Bill's very fine collection of circus material.

At the Kelly-Miller Winter Quarters, activities were not yet in full swing but they were painting, building frames for cage trucks and working on new poles. The quarters were full of animals. There were around fifteen bulls in the barn.

"Buckles" Woodcock took them on a tour of the cat barn. Several other types of animals were also stored in the barn. "Buckles" is expecting a call from Uncle Sam at any moment.

The George W. Cole (the old Cole & Walters Circus) and Ted Carson Circuses also stay in Hugo during the winter. Mr. Woodcock took us down to the Cole shop where a new Rhino Walk Through Show was being constructed on a truck. The Cole shop is located in a vacant building in the downtown area. The banners were also being painted. The Ted Carson Circus equipment is located a few blocks from town. This is not a very large circus, and it does not play large towns.

Robbins Bros. Circus, 1938

By Joseph T. Bradbury

Probably no name in the circus world has rivaled the name "Robbins" in getting printed on letterheads or painted on the sides of circus wagons and trucks. Many parties throughout the years have used some version of the name Robbins as titles for circuses. The last time this name was used on a railroad circus was in 1938, although truck versions appeared as late as 1949. This 1938 show was entitled Robbins Bros. Circus, owned by Jess Adkins and Zack Terrell, and it is doubted if a finer 15 car circus ever existed. This article is about that show.

In the short span of 3 years Adkins and Terrell had risen to the top in the circus kingdom. They put their Cole Bros. Circus on the road in 1935 and after a shakey start, grew by leaps and bounds, until in 1937 they emerged with a powerful 40 car circus, featuring one of the most elaborate street parades in 15 years, and a performance headed by top names such as Clyde Beatty and Ken Maynard. The 1937 Cole Bros. Circus was a first class money getter, and a real thorn in the side of Ringling-Barnum which had coasted along since 1929 without any real opposition.

In August, 1937, Adkins and Terrell made their plans for a No. 2 show to go on the road in 1938. Rumors flew thick and fast but the official announcement of the new show was not made until the Feb. 19, 1938 Billboard gave the complete story. Name of the new show was to be Robbins Bros. 3 Ring Circus. It would go on 25 cars, have 17 cages, 16 elephants, 110 head of baggage stock, 87 head of liberty and ring horses, and feature a street parade. However, other factors were arising to change most of these plans except the name. The business recession began setting in in late 1937, creating a great deal of unemployment and labor unrest. Adkins and Terrell almost cancelled their No. 2 show plans in the fall of 1937, but so great was their faith that another rail show could be routed into money areas and be operated as a paying proposition they went ahead with their plans.

Eddie Arlington, one of the smartest circus business men of all times, writing in March 19, 1938 Billboard, stated that it was a fine idea to put another rail show on the road. However, he said that the show should not be a 25 car Jerry Mugivan type of show, but a sure fire 15 car circus with a parade which Adkins & Terrell would be able to handle very easily. Several weeks prior to this article Adkins and Terrell had accepted this very suggestion. The Robbins show would be on 15 cars with a fine parade, good performance, a top Hollywood cowboy drawing attraction, and would be easy to put into the key towns in the U. S. and Canada.

The show was built from the ground up at the Rochester, Ind. quarters. In March, 1938 articles of incorporation were filed with the Indiana Secretary of State for Robbins Bros. Circus Inc. Incorporators were F. E. Schortemeier, Robert K. Eby, and Joseph G. Wood. There were 1000 shares of no par value capital stock.

Jess Adkins purchased 4 sleepers for the show in Chicago and the Warren Tank Car Co. was given an order for 6 new all steel flat cars and 4 new steel stocks. Warren delivered the cars to Rochester in mid-March.

Floyd King was appointed general agent and Fred C. Kilgore general contracting agent. They proceeded to route the show from the mid-west into the east and eastern Canada.

Charlie Luckey, master mechanic, built 14 baggage wagons in quarters as well as a new red ticket wagon and grandstand ticket wagon. Most of the baggage wagons were equipped with hard rubber tired wheels. Baggage wagons were painted orange with title in silver leaf, and gears were red with yellow striping.

Erie Lithographing & Printing Co. and Enquirer Job Printing Co. furnished the stock and special paper for the show. Many beautiful special designs were used.

New animals were purchased from the San Diego Zoo and the John Robinson Military Elephants were leased by the show for the season, however the elephants remained only a short time. Since the Cole Bros. Circus was being cut down from 40 to 30 cars for the 1938 season that left considerable excess animals, stock, etc., to be used by Robbins.

Rex de Rosselli staged the opening spec "La Argentina" and new wardrobe was made for both the spec and the parade.

Will Bockwell was named manager of a very elaborate No. 1 advertising car which was beautifully decorated with the title and scroll. Car was painted orange with title in blue and silver shade.

The show carried the following tableaux and calliopes, all of which were handsomely painted and decorated in gold leaf and retained the traditional sunburst wheels. Five tableau wagons came to the show with a common history. The United States, Great Britain, France, Belgium, and India or Hippo tableaux were all built by the Bode Wagon Works of Cincinnati from designs made by George Bellis. These were part of a set of truck tableau sides built for Frank Spellman's U. S. Motorized Circus of 1917. This circus had a short life and the tabs were purchased by Bob Schiller. Schiller later sold 8 of these tabs to Fred Buchanan for his 1924 Robbins Bros. Circus. Buchanan converted them to wagons and used United States, Great Britain, France, Belgium, India, China, Panama, and South America on his Robbins Bros. Circus until mid-season 1930 when he cut his train from 30 to 20 cars, sending 10 cars of equipment including China, Panama, and South America, back to his quarters in Granger, Iowa. The remaining 5 wagons were on the show through the 1931 season and after the show folded ended up at the old Hall Farm at Lancaster, Mo. Adkins & Terrell purchased the Robbins 15 car show at the Hall Farm in the fall of 1934 but never used any of the 5 tabs until 1938 except France which was on Cole Bros. in 1937.

The remaining tableau which Robbins used in 1938 was No. 32 which originally was an old Barnum & Bailey mirror tableau den with carved corner statues. G. W. Christy acquired this old tab-den and converted it into an air calliope and used it on his Christy Bros. Circus from 1926 through 1930. Adkins & Terrell got this wagon when they purchased the old 20 car Christy Bros. show in fall of 1934 at South Houston, Texas where the show had been parked since it went broke in July, 1930. This wagon was used as an air calliope on Cole Bros. seasons 1935-37.

The steam calliope was one of the familiar Sullivan & Eagle jobs which was built in winter of 1902-03 for the short lived Louella Forepaugh Fish Wild West Show. This calliope soon after got to Gollmar Bros. and remained through the 1916 season. In 1917 it was on the Gollmar-Patterson Circus, in 1919 was on the Patterson & Kline Carnival, and undoubtedly on one of the Patterson carnivals through 1921 season. In 1922 it was on the James Patterson's Big 4 Ring Circus and was sold in winter of 1922-23 to G. W. Christy where it was on the Christy Bros. Circus 1923-30. Adkins & Terrell used it on Cole Bros. 1935-37 and for 1938 shifted it over to Robbins Bros. as Cole Bros. would not parade in 1938.

The air calliope originated on the old Fred Buchanan Yankee Robinson Circus about 1918 and was one of the "held-out" items in the notorious sale of the Yank show to Mugivan & Bowers following 1920 season. Anyway, Buchanan retained possession of it and when he re-entered the show world as a owner in 1923 this air calliope went on his World Bros. Circus, and from 1924-31 it was on his Robbins Bros. Circus. Adkins & Terrell used it as the unifon on Cole Bros. 1935-37.

For 1938 Robbins Bros. began the season traveling on 15 cars, 1 in advance and 14 back. Train consisted of 1 advertising car, 4 stock cars, 6 flats, and 4 coaches. The flats and stocks were painted aluminum with title in blue and orange shade. Sleepers were orange with title in blue with silver shade.

The train loading order was as follows.

Flat Car No. 43

Canvas wagon No. 82
Red ticket wagon No. 30
Side show baggage wagon No. 42
Tableau No. 32 (concessions dept. wagon)
India or Hippo tableau No. 84 (carried seats; sideshow band in parade)

Flat Car No. 41

Menagerie canvas and baggage wagon No. 71
Air calliope No. 72
Cross cage No. 12 (carried monkeys)
Canvas wagon No. 87
Horse top wagon No. 83 (also carried small tops)
Blacksmith, carpenter, and repair wagon No. 88

Flat Car No. 42

Pole and stringer wagon No. 80
Small 4 wheel tractor
Mack truck (water tank body)
Light plant No. 50

Flat Car No. 44

Cookhouse baggage wagon No. 20
 Cookhouse steam boiler wagon No. 21
 Stake driver No. 89
 Cross cage No. 18 (carried 1 lion and 1 leopard)
 Cage No. 10 (carried deer)
 Cage No. 14 (carried 1 lion and 1 tiger)

Flat Car No. 45

Cage No. 15 (carried 1 kangaroo and 1 bear)
 Steam calliope No. 31
 Ring curbs and seat wagon No. 86
 Seat wagon No. 73
 Prop wagon No. 61

Flat Car No. 46

United States Bandwagon No. 85 (carried grandstand chairs)
 France tableau No. 41 (carried trunks, side show props)
 Belgium tableau No. 70
 Great Britain tableau No. 81

Stock Car No. 30—carried 10 elephants

Stock Car No. 31—carried 30 head of baggage stock

Stock Car No. 33—carried 24 head of ring stock, 10 ponies, 1 zebra, and 1 donkey

Stock car No. 35—carried 16 head of baggage stock, 8 ponies, 3 camels

Coaches were No. 51, 57, 59, and 54 which was a combination coach, pie car and diner.

Total of 30 pieces of equipment were loaded on the 6 flat cars. Equipment included 1 truck, 1 tractor, 1 steam calliope, 1 air calliope, 5 cages, 6 tableau wagons, and 15 baggage wagons.

Menagerie consisted of 10 elephants. There were 4 large show owned bulls—Ding Dong, George, Katie, and Barney; 3 small show owned bulls—Modoc, Empress, and Judy; and the John Robinson elephants, Clara, Pitt, and Tony. The Robinson elephants didn't remain long on the show. The above list of elephants is not guaranteed to be absolutely correct but is believed to be so. Other lead stock consisted of 3 camels, 1 zebra, 1 donkey, 18 ponies, 24 head of ring stock, and 46 head of baggage stock.

There were 5 cages in menagerie, contents given in train loading order. Cages No. 12 and 18 were painted white with varied painted decorations and the title and were loaded crosswise on the flat cars. These were small and only 8 ft. long but took up only 6 ft. on the flats. The other cages were 12 ft. long. Cage No. 10 was painted white and Cage No. 14 painted red. Both were of Christy Bros. origin and had gold leaf carvings on the sides and skyboards, with title painted under the skyboard. Cage No. 15 was painted white and had been built new in 1937 at Rochester quarters. It was similar to the Christy cages and had gold leaf carved posts on side of cage and carvings on the skyboards.

The parade lineup was as follows:

1. 2 lady menage riders led parade.
2. No. 85 United States Bandwagon (No. 1 band) 6 horse hitch
3. 4 riders
4. No. 10 cage, 4 horse hitch
5. No. 32 corner statue tableau, 4 horse hitch
6. 2 riders
7. No. 41 France tableau, 6 horse hitch
8. No. 15 cage, 4 horse hitch
9. No. 18 cross cage, 6 pony hitch
10. 4 riders
11. No. 70 Belgium tableau, 6 horse hitch
12. No. 12 cross cage, 6 pony hitch
13. 2 riders
14. No. 81 Great Britain tableau, 6 horse hitch
15. No. 14, 4 horses
16. 2 riders
17. No. 84 India or Hippo tableau, 6 horse hitch
18. No. 72 air calliope, 6 pony hitch

19. 10 Wild West riders
20. 3 camels
21. 1 zebra
22. 10 elephants
23. No. 31 steam calliope, 4 horse hitch, sometimes pulled by Mack truck

All cages in parade were open.

The 1938 program was as follows. However as the season progressed and the show retrenched somewhat acts were changed and eliminated. Program remained pretty much the same though until August 15.

Display No. 1

Spec, "La Argentina"

Display No. 2

Velarde Trio

The Marcillis

Nippone Troupe

Display No. 3

Three Troupes of Sea Lions

Albert Fleet

Clarence Canary

Richard Entley

Note: This act listed but not known if actually appeared on show

Display No. 4

Equestrienne

Miss Georgia Sweet

European Rider

Miss Rose Wallet

Skilled Horsemanship

Miss Juanita Hogson

Display No. 5

The Oriental Wongs

The Karljos

Aljos Troupe

Display No. 6

Clowns

Display No. 7

An Imposing Array of Aerial Artists

Miss Esma Wilson

Double Trapeze

Miss Jean Evans

Miss Ella Harris

The Great Moreens

Miss Ida Voise

The Girl in the Golden Whirl—Miss Peggy Leonard

QUEENS OF THE SWINGING TRAPEZE—Senorita Velsea, Miss Armita Velarde

In the Dome of the Arena

Miss Marie Harding

Miss Doris Swisher

Miss Ida Mills

Miss Edna Sullivan

Miss Jeanne Teeters

Miss Mable McGrath

Display No. 8

Three Troupes of Elephants

Miss Irene Walters

Miss Dorothy Thompson

Miss Ella Harris

Display No. 9

Aerial Bar Performers—Alpine Brothers

Display No. 10

Clowns

Display No. 11

Three Rings of Wire Acts

Ramona Sisters

Senor Velarde

Armata

Display No. 12

Clowns

Display No. 13

Queen of Aerial Gymnasts—Mlle O'Dell

Display No. 14

Ponies

Clarence Canary

Liberty Horses

John Smith

Ponies

Frank Schmidt

Display No. 15Gymnasts
Sisters Rita

Sullivan Sisters

Tacoma Sisters

Display No. 16

The Valdoso

Billy Moreen

Cornado Brothers

Display No. 17

Champion Riders of Europe—The Hobson Family

Display No. 18

Clowns

Display No. 19

Gymnasts

The Moreen Family

The Toyama Troupe

Arcadian Family

Display No. 20

High School Horses in all three rings and on the track

Display No. 21

The Toonerville Ganda Dancers

Display No. 22

Flying Acts

The Flying Thrillers

Aerial Behees

Hoot Gibson and company presented a very pleasing wild west concert following the big show.

The 1938 staff was as follows: Jess Adkins and Zack Terrell, owners; Jess Adkins, manager; Floyd King, general agent; Fred C. Kilgore, contracting agent; Milt Robbins, side show manager; Bernie Head, contracting press agent; Harry McFarland, equestrian director; and Rodney Harris, bandmaster.

The Baker-Lockwood Co. of Kansas City, furnished all new canvas for the show. The big top was about a 135 round with two 40 ft. and one 50ft. middle pieces. Other canvas included a 4-pole menagerie top, side show, horse top, drissing room, and cookhouse. On opening day the show made an impressive sight on the lot.

The show opened April 30 at Kokomo, Indiana. The train had arrived from Rochester several days before and rehearsals were held a couple days prior to opening.

After opening the show jumped into Ohio to complete the first week. Youngstown was the best stand of the week but the first week's business was far short of expectations and reflected general business conditions in the mid-west which usually produces good business at this time of year.

Due to a Sunday Blue Law the stand at Dennison, Ohio had to be cancelled. The next day at Newark the management moved quickly to meet the economic conditions of the day. A smaller big top was put into use, a 120 round with one 50 and two 40 middles. Seating capacity however remained the same. The larger top was sent back to Baker-Lockwood. The performers roster was cut as well as all working departments. Production numbers that had formerly called for 8 people were cut to 4, etc. All performers doubled up. Girls rode spec, menage, worked web, worked in one or more acts, took up tickets and ushered, and perhaps helped out in wardrobe. It was evident to all that these measures were necessary if the show was to stay out. The price of children's general admission was reduced from 50 to 25 cents. The performance was not drastically retrenched but the operating "nut" of the show was cut to a minimum. From then on the show continued to move along without any financial difficulty and was even able to put money into the larger Cole show in an effort to keep that show out as long as possible.

A minimum of operational difficulties was encountered. Everything ran smoothly. Trainmaster McGrath had the show loaded and moved out of town seldom later than 12:30 A.M.

Enroute from McKeesport, Pa., after a very good days business, to Johnstown, on May 14 the elephant car jumped the track and crashed into a steel bridge. Fortunately no one nor the elephants were hurt but the delay caused the show to lose Johnstown.

The fourth week found the show in Western New York. Binghamton was the best stand with a two thirds matinee and almost full night house. Warren, Pa., under Shrine auspices produced good business.

On May 31 the show entered Canada at St. Cathrines, Ont., for an extended tour. Hoot Gibson went over big in Canada and the street parade was the first in many years in most towns and helped create good business. The Canadian National Railroad gave excellent service. For example they moved the train 180 miles from St. John, Que. through Montreal to Quebec City in 5 hours. Despite the long jumps in Canada there were no delays in the parade or matinee.

The Robbins show was welcomed into the Maritime provinces. It was the first circus in those parts since Al G. Barnes in 1935.

Back in the States the economic recession was taking its toll of shows. All were encountering bad business. The brand new 30 car Tim McCoy Wild West Show had gone broke almost by the time that Robbins opened. Downie Bros. closed May 31 and went back to Macon quarters. The Ringling-Barnum Circus after weeks of labor trouble closed at Scranton, Pa. on June 22. The closing of the Big Show caused some quick changes in routing on the two Adkins & Terrell shows. Floyd King was appointed general agent of Cole Bros. on June 29 in addition to the same job he held on the Robbins Show. King moved quickly to pick up New England dates that had been abandoned by Ringling-Barnum.

On June 11 the Robbins Show played Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. The old timers used to say you weren't a real trouper until you had made Prince Edward Island by ferry.

The show reentered the States at Houlton, Me June 29, played Caribou the next day, and then jumped back into Canada so as to be there on Dominion Day, July 1 at Woodstock, N.B., and then back into the States for good July 2 at Calais, Me. The Canadian tour had covered 3000 miles and 25 stands.

In Maine the show was on green, grassy lots, but experienced a week of rainy weather. Portland was substituted for North Conway, N.H. on July 8 to pick up the date Ringling had cancelled. Portland produced two full houses. Despite rain in Vermont the show drew well. The parade was held in a pouring rain at Manchester, N.H. July 18 but was called off the next day at Worcester, Mass. The Billboard states that a new big top was received at Worcester, however it is believed that only 2 new 50 ft. middle pieces were added.

Despite the fact that Robbins had been sending money to try and keep Cole Bros. on the road, that show finally had to close. An Indiana investment firm which held a mortgage on the equipment refused to advance any more money. Cole was at Bloomington, Ill. August 3 and was scheduled to play at LaSalle the next day. Many CFA's were on the lot at Bloomington and were completely unaware, as was the entire crew of workmen, performers etc., as to what was going to happen in the night.

A secret rail contract was made with the Nickle Plate Railroad to move the show back to Rochester quarters that night. The next morning the performers and workmen woke up in Rochester, and an announcement was made then that the show had closed.

Plans were made to enlarge the Robbins show which continued on in Pennsylvania and then south through Virginia. Richmond and Norfolk gave big business.

At Bluefield, W. Va. on August 15 six cars from the Cole Show were added to the Robbins train. These included 2 flats, 2 stocks, and 2 coaches. The Robbins train now had 1 car in advance and 20 cars back, 6 stocks, 8 flats, and 6 coaches. The flats contained the 9 cages of Clyde Beatty's wild animal act and the hippo den. One stock car had baggage stock and the other wild west stock. The coaches carried the additional personnel and the wild west contingent, although Ken Maynard had previously left Cole.

After enlargement the show played in West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and then into North Carolina for 16 stands in the tobacco territory. Downie Bros. which had resumed its tour on August 15 was in opposition in some North Carolina stands.

Attendance was better in the South but the show actually fared worse due to the considerable increase in the operating nut which was now very hard to make in most stands.

The Al G. Barnes-Sells Floto Circus now presenting Ringling-Barnum Features was a real thorn in most places, especially in Florida where a real old time billing war took place in many cities. Barnes-Floto "waited" Robbins in many stands including Atlanta.

A two day stand at Atlanta, Oct. 17 and 18 gave turnaway business and was the biggest of the Southern tour of over 60 stands.

The Robbins personnel were given a similiar dose of sudden closing as their Cole brethren had experienced. Decatur, Al. was played Oct. 22 and the show was billed for Columbia, Tenn. Oct. 24 and Hopkinsville, Ky. on Oct. 25. On Sunday morning, Oct. 23, however, when the personnel woke up the train was in Nashville yards. An announcement was made that the show had closed and that the train was on the way to Rochester, Ind. All personnel were let go in Nashville unless they paid for the ride to Rochester. The season had covered 17 states and 5 provinces of Canada, and 13,000 miles.

Adkins and Terrell were bankrupt with heavy claims placed against both the Robbins and Cole shows. Through the aid of friends they were able to raise enough funds to lease from the investment company which held the circus property, equipment to put out a 20 car circus in 1939 called Cole Bros. Circus. They never used the Robbins title again. The Robbins equipment was used to pay claims, and some of it went into the 1939 Cole Show.

A fire at Rochester quarters in February, 1940, destroyed most of the tableau wagons. Only the France wagon still remains and it is owned by Block & Kuhl Dept. Store in Peoria, Ill. Alex Clarke, circus fan, has part of the old steam calliope wagon and hopes eventually to have it restored. As late as 1950 I saw several of the old wagons still bearing the Robbins title parked at the Bradley Farms in Rochester. The old calliope body was still there suffering the inglorious fate of being used as a coal bin. No doubt a few of the old Cole baggage wagons in Peru were used on the Robbins show in 1938, and it is gratifying to learn that Paul Kelly plans to keep the wagons there as museum pieces.

OLD TROUPER DIES

Hank Lachance, known to circus people as Hank Norris died in Wilmington, Ohio, on May 14, 1955. He was on the Norris & Rowe, Hagenbeck Wallace and other shows. Burial was in Wilmington. He was by birth a French-Canadian and was a veteran of the English Army in the First World War.

The Circus Historical Society sent flowers.

CIRCUS LOVER DIES

Mr. Norman Lawrence, died in his hometown of Natchez, Mississippi on December 16, 1954. He had always been interested in the circus and was a member of the Circus Model Builders. He brought the Big One to Natchez in November before he died, that had been his one ambition and his friends were glad that he had completed. He was a member of the Elks Club and chairman of the circus committee for the organization.

1955
C. H. S.
CONVENTION

♦ ♦

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